



# Focus

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## Underground Injection Control (UIC) Program Rule Revision

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### Background

The Underground Injection Control Program (UIC) protects ground water quality by regulating the disposal of fluids into the subsurface. Most UIC wells or injection wells are simple devices that allow fluids to flow into the shallow subsurface under the force of gravity. For example, in Washington State thousands of UIC wells (mainly dry wells) are located along parking lots and roads to manage stormwater runoff. The potential for ground water contamination from UIC wells can occur and is dependent on:

- Well construction and location;
- Volume and quality of the fluids discharged; and
- Hydrogeologic setting.

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### What are Injection Wells?

Injection wells are man-made or improved holes in the ground, deeper than they are wide at the ground surface, or an improved sinkhole or a sub-surface fluid distribution system. They are used to release or dispose of fluids underground. Examples include sumps, drywells, drainfields, and infiltration trenches that contain perforated pipe. A fluid is any flowing matter, regardless of whether it is in a semisolid, liquid, sludge, or gaseous state. The fluid may be injected for a beneficial use (e.g., ground water recharge or at an aquifer remediation site) or potentially harmful (e.g., misuse of a septic system by accepting fluids other than sanitary waste).

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### Why is the UIC rule being revised?

In 1999 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized revisions to the federal UIC Program rule. Our state rule is not consistent with the new federal revisions and must be changed.

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### What are the main points of the revision?

Our rule will revise state language to become current with the new federal rule. The federal rule changed definitions, and banned two types of wells – large capacity cesspools and motor vehicle waste disposal wells. Both of these wells are already banned in Washington.

The revision will also clarify current rule language. One of the proposed changes is to clarify the allowable types of fluids discharged into UIC wells.

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### Who is involved in the revision process?

The Department of Ecology is the lead agency for the UIC rule revision process.

An advisory committee has been formed to represent the various entities that use UIC wells. The committee will advise Ecology on the proposed rule. The advisory committee is comprised of representatives from cities, counties, and state agencies. The advisory committee meetings are open to the public. The first meeting was in Ellensburg on October 10, 2002.

Another way you may become involved is by providing comments on the draft rule. The open comment period is scheduled to begin in March 2003. Contact Mary Shaleen Hansen by email at [maha461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:maha461@ecy.wa.gov) or phone (360) 407-6143.

### **How can you become involved?**

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The rule revision process started in 2001. The first meeting for the UIC advisory committee was in early October with three additional meetings planned. The proposed public comment period for the UIC rule is March 2003.

You can attend the advisory committee meetings and or comment on the draft rule language by visiting the UIC website at:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/grndwtr/uic/index.html>

### **For more information**

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*Ecology is an equal opportunity agency. If you have special accommodation needs, please call Donna Lynch at (360) 407-7529. The TTY number is 7-1-1 or 1-800-833-6388. Email may be sent to [dlyn461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:dlyn461@ecy.wa.gov)*